



Town of Berwyn Heights

5700 Berwyn Road
Berwyn Heights, MD 20740
Tel. (301) 474-5000
Fax (301) 474-5002

MAYOR
Amanda M. Dewey

COUNCIL MEMBERS
Jodie A. Kulpa-Eddy (Mayor Pro Tem)
Christopher S. Brittan Powell
Jason W. Papanikolas
Ethan D. Sweep

Town Meeting Minutes January 13, 2021 | 7:00 pm

This meeting was held by videoconference due to the ongoing COVID-19 health emergency. The meeting was broadcast on Berwyn Heights cable TV channels and streamed on the Town website. Residents were given the opportunity to comment by telephone, Zoom, and email.

Call to Order 7:00 p.m.

Present were Mayor Amanda Dewey, Mayor Pro Tempore (MPT) Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Councilmembers (CMs) Chris Brittan-Powell, and Ethan Sweep. CM Jason Papanikolas had an excused absence. Also present were Town Manager (TM) Laura Allen, Town Clerk Kerstin Harper, Historical Committee Chair Debby Steele-Snyder and Recreation Council President Susan Jones.

Pledge of Allegiance

1. Announcements

Mayor Dewey conveyed Berwyn Heights condolences to the City of Greenbelt, which lost a police officer in the performance of her duties.

2. Approval of the Agenda

CM Sweep moved and CM Brittan seconded to approve the agenda. Mayor Dewey asked to amend the agenda to move "Town Council Sedition Statement" to the beginning of the meeting. The agenda was approved 4 to 0 as amended.

3. Town Council Sedition Statement

Mayor Dewey thanked Councilmembers Sweep and Papanikolas for drafting a statement condemning the events of January 6 at the U.S. Capitol as acts of domestic terrorism and insurrection. CM Sweep read the statement and moved to adopt it. CM Brittan-Powell seconded.

There ensued discussion. Mayor Dewey said she believes it is important for the community to hear the Council's reaction to the events. CM Brittan Powell proposed to include a phrase stating that 'as a governing body, the Town Council recognizes that we are a country of laws anchored in the constitution.'

MPT Kulpa-Eddy expressed concern about parts of the statement that can be viewed as partisan, in particular the second sentence of the first paragraph, as well as a one-sided condemnation of violent protests. She believes all violent behavior during protests should be investigated and prosecuted to the full extent of the law, no matter who is doing it. Further, she disagrees with pointedly stating the event was incited by the President and then calling for the resignation or removal from office of elected officials who incited the Capitol riots, as stated in the second sentence of the third paragraph. She

believes that all the facts about the events have not yet been ascertained. She would consider supporting the statement if those sentences are deleted.

Mayor Dewey replied she strongly disagrees with this perspective but would sign a statement that removes the words ‘right wing.’ She believes calling for the “resignation or removal of elected officials” can remain as no officials are named. She further suggested not to get into a prolonged argument about what occurred on January 6, 2021 but to endorse the statement with minor changes for sake of demonstrating unity.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy further stated she would not sign a statement that maintains the Capitol riot was incited by the President, as this has not been adjudicated in a court of law. Mayor Dewey said she respects MPT Kulpa-Eddy’s position and asked whether the remaining Councilmembers can support the statement as written.

CM Sweep said he believes the statement already reflects the differing perspectives on the Council, as he and CM Papanikolas drafted it in a process of mutual editing. He would not be comfortable with signing a statement that does anything less than drawing a line with respect to the behavior exhibited by President Trump and his supporters.

Mayor Dewey asked for a vote on the statement that includes CM Brittan-Powell’s reference to the United States being a country of laws. The Council voted 3 to 1 to adopt the statement as amended, with MPT Kulpa-Eddy opposed.

4. Approval of Minutes

On a motion by MPT Kulpa-Eddy, seconded by CM Sweep, the November 16 worksession minutes were approved 4 to 0. On a motion by MPT Kulpa-Eddy, seconded by CM Brittan-Powell, the December 7 worksession minutes were approved 4 to 0. On a motion by MPT Kulpa-Eddy, seconded by CM Brittan-Powell, the December 9 Town meeting minutes were approved 4 to 0, as amended.

5. Mayor’s Report

Mayor Dewey reported she will attend the Maryland Municipal League (MML) Legislative Committee meetings occurring weekly while the State Legislature is in session and monitor legislation that affects local government. She also attended meetings with Prince George’s County and Senator Cardin about COVID vaccination plans. Residents are encouraged to remain engaged in the community and consider participating in the new Neighbor to Neighbor program and subscribing to the e-newsletter. Mayor Dewey also advised residents to refrain from attending the Inaugural celebrations next week.

6. Department Reports

MPT Kulpa-Eddy moved, and CM Brittan-Powell seconded to accept the department reports into the record. The motion passed 4 to 0.

Administration – Town Manager’s Report: TM Allen relayed information that County Executive Alsobrooks shared during a briefing about the COVID vaccine rollout. First responders, including Berwyn Heights police, are in the process of being vaccinated as part of Phase 1A. Phase 1B beginning in February will include adults 75 years and older and government employees who ensure continuity of operations, among others. They are followed in Phase 1C by adults 65–75 years-old, and employees in key sectors of the economy.

BHPD is trying to arrange for the County's mobile health clinic to come to Berwyn Heights to administer vaccinations to seniors. Any nurses or health care workers residing in the Town are encouraged to contact TM Allen if they can offer assistance.

In response to questions, Mayor Dewey and TM Allen said that vaccination plans are subject to change. They will inquire whether people working in agricultural research are included in Phase 1B. The vaccination plan is based on use of currently approved vaccines.

In other news, TM Allen reported that Washington Gas made repairs to gas lines on 62nd Avenue and that the Town's food donation to the Berwyn Presbyterian food pantry was redirected to its parent organization 'Help by Phone,' which also benefits people in this area.

Administration – Treasurer's Report: In response to MPT Kulpa-Eddy, TM Allen said real estate taxes are coming in as expected so far. She will look into personal property tax receipts for an update.

Code Compliance: CM Brittan-Powell reported that Director Goodwin is planning to implement virtual home inspections. TM Allen added that the Code Department performed a couple of test home inspections using smart phones. The process still requires some adjustments, but the Code Department hopes to be ready for virtual inspections within a month.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy noted that the monthly Code report has confusing information about stormwater drainage problems and requested this topic be added to an upcoming worksession agenda. TM Allen said the Code Department has dealt with several stormwater drainage issues and is exploring collaborating with WSSC on drainage solutions when they repair the roads following the watermain replacement project. The County's Raincheck Rebate program could also be a solution for stormwater runoff problems.

Parks, Recreation, Education and Civic Affairs: MPT Kulpa-Eddy said she participated in a focus group for municipal stakeholders on developing a Youth & Countywide Sports Division strategic plan at which the maintenance, allocation and permitting of Park & Planning fields was discussed. The new division is conducting an inventory of current recreational resources to address any unmet needs. Input can be given online at PGParks.com/GameOnPlan. Further, Prince George's County is conducting a cultural arts survey to which residents can respond through a link on the Town website until February 1 and is hosting a January 28 virtual meeting on integrating cultural arts into the County's economic development and land use strategies.

In response to CM Brittan-Powell, MPT Kulpa-Eddy said the Youth & Countywide Sports Division is in the beginning phase of assessing recreational assets and their use. No decisions are yet being made on the use of any particular field, such as Sports Park, on integrating independent sports leagues into the programming or on increasing sporting opportunities for girls.

Public Works: CM Sweep reported that the trash collection will follow a modified schedule following the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday next week and that Public Works has been working hard to collect all remaining leaf piles still sitting at the curb. TM Allen added that she toured the Town today and the leaf collection looks to be almost complete. Any homeowners whose leaves have not been picked up should call Town Hall so that the Public Works crew can be dispatched to that location.

Public Safety: Mayor Dewey reminded everyone to stay home for Inauguration Day. In December Sergeant Moroney and Corporal Ignowski officially retired and were feted with a virtual retirement party, which she was happy to attend. BHPD advises residents to lock their cars to prevent thefts from

vehicles. Lastly, residents are encouraged to follow COVID-19 safety protocols throughout the vaccination process, which is likely to take several months. The Town's flag was lowered over the weekend to honor the police officer who lost his life in the Capitol riots of January 6.

7. Committee Reports

Education Advisory Committee: MPT Kulpa-Eddy reported that the BHEAC drafted a form for education grant applications and presented it to the Council. Next the BHEAC will develop a grant review process that will be submitted to the Council for input and approval. MPT Kulpa-Eddy also announced deadlines for applying to PGCPs specialty programs and a meeting on the PGCPs school boundaries initiative at which stakeholders can give input. Alternatively, comments can be given via an online form [at https://www.pgcp.org/boundary](https://www.pgcp.org/boundary).

In response to CM Brittan Powell, MPT Kulpa-Eddy said PGCPs is including a projected increase in student population into its facility and boundary planning process. The BHEAC is taking the lead in proposing how to best advocate for the Town in the context of rising student populations and will discuss the boundary initiative at its upcoming meeting on January 25.

Green Team: Mayor Dewey reported that the Green Team will meet on January 14 and go through its workplan. On the agenda are Bee City USA membership, working with Thriving Earth Exchange, trees and stormwater issues. MPT Kulpa-Eddy added that the Green Team is also discussing Pepco's LED streetlights upgrade and a litter map project in partnership with Anacostia Watershed Society volunteers to collect data on litter hotspots in Town.

Historical Committee: BHHC Chair Debby Steele Snyder announced an upcoming meeting to be held virtually on January 27, 2021. The Committee will be discussing whether to add a disclaimer to its [BerwynHeightsHistory.com website](http://BerwynHeightsHistory.com) to explain that language used on historic markers and associated pamphlets may include terms that are no longer considered appropriate. The marker review was taken up per request by MPT Kulpa-Eddy.

Neighborhood Watch/ Emergency Preparedness: MPT Kulpa-Eddy reported that NW/EP Chair Mike Attick could not attend the last Committee meeting. The Committee, operating under the auspices of BHPD, was introduced to a new officer, who was hired to replace one of two recently retired police officers. A second replacement is in the process of being interviewed. Also discussed was future function of the new emergency, i.e. whether it will be used primarily for the neighborhood watch function or for emergency preparedness, as has been the case to date. Mayor Dewey said she will ask Chief Antolik and TM Allen to discuss next steps for the trailer.

NW/EP Chair Mike Attick commented by telephone that the supplies from the old trailer were supposed to be transferred to the new trailer, but some appear to be missing. Clarification from the Chief and Town Manager on which supplies should go into the new trailer would be welcome.

Recreation Council: Recreation Council President Susan Jones announced an upcoming virtual concert featuring guitarist and singer George Anaya. She said she is thinking about a Valentines craft project for children and sought guidance on whether and how to supply craft kits to participants. Mayor Dewey referred a decision to emergency manager TM Allen and Chief Antolik for discussion.

Ms. Jones said she is also thinking about a parade for St. Patrick's Day and another Trivia Night as possible events for March and April, as well as Berwyn Heights Day, which is likely to be a limited this year because no one yet knows the extent of COVID restrictions in effect in May. Town organizations will be consulted about ideas for Berwyn Heights Day activities.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy reminded residents to consider signing up for the Town's Neighbor to Neighbor program which seeks to connect residents with each other based on shared interests. This is a pilot project to determine whether such a program might be part of a future welcome packet for new residents. TM Allen noted 6 applications have been received so far and applications will be accepted until this Friday. MPT Kulpa-Eddy further stated that a survey will be published in the next Bulletin and online seeking residents' input on the FY 2022 budget. Residents can also give feedback at a budget town hall meeting planned for February.

8. Old Business

There was none.

9. New Business

Resolution 01-2021 – Council Rules on Minutes & Consent Agenda: Mayor Dewey said this Resolution would amend the Council Rules to align policy with the current practice of reviewing and approving minutes and to add a consent agenda process for approving uncontroversial items. During previous discussions, the Council modified the process for resident comments to no longer require the stating of one's address when giving input and to clarify the process for residents to request agenda items.

CM Sweep moved to approve the Resolution and MPT Kulpa-Eddy seconded. MPT Kulpa-Eddy suggested removing a sentence from Council Rule 1, Section B 1 (a) that "encourages" residents to provide their name and address when requesting an item be placed on the agenda. The sentence is not needed since a resident would have to provide their name, contact information and the nature of their request in order to make arrangements with staff about an agenda item prior to a meeting. The Council had no objection.

Secondly, MPT Kulpa-Eddy noted CM Papanikolas had recommended replacing the word 'citizen' with 'resident' throughout the document and asked if this change should be made. TM Allen said 'resident' may not cover members of the business community who may wish to comment on matters before the Council. The Council agreed to use the broader phrase 'resident and community input' to cover all who may want to provide comments.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy moved to amend the Council Rules to include the changes just proposed. CM Sweep seconded. The motion passed 4 to 0. The Council then voted 4 to 0 to approve the Resolution previously moved and seconded.

Resolution 02-2021 – Pandemic Leave & Vaccination Incentive Policies: TM Allen explained this Resolution proposes to establish two policies related to the pandemic. The first policy awards additional leave at a rate of 1 day per month to staff who were required to work in person onsite during the pandemic from July – December 2020 but did not receive hazard pay through the CARES Act. This includes Code Compliance staff and the Town Clerk. The policy provides the same benefit to all employees who are required to work in person onsite January – June 2021.

The second policy proposes to award two days of leave to employees who voluntarily get the COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available for them. The leave will become available only after they have completed the two-step vaccination process. Leave is proposed in lieu of monetary compensation because of budget uncertainties and because employees said they would appreciate the leave.

In response to MPT Kulpa-Eddy, TM Allen said she is not aware of an extension of any funding by Prince George's County into 2021 that would allow for the continuation of hazard pay. However, if the federal government makes additional money available to state and local governments in the future, the Council might reconsider its policy and reinstate hazard pay. Further, if the Town should learn that there may be a legal impediment to awarding annual leave as a vaccination incentive, the matter will be brought back to the Council for deliberation and potential enactment of a different incentive.

CM Sweep proposed to grant employees two additional sick days for the event they might become sick from the vaccination. TM Allen said that is a fair point and recommended adding a time restriction of 10 days for the use of such sick leave if they have an adverse reaction.

CM Sweep moved to adopt the Resolution as amended. CM Brittan-Powell seconded. The motion passed 4 to 0.

10. Resident and Community Comments

In response to MPT Kulpa-Eddy, TM Allen said Comcast will send out a crew to look for dangling wires and debris left behind by contractors working on upgrading their lines last week. Residents finding shopping carts are requested to report them to the store to which they belong first. If there is no response, Public Works can be contacted and will return them when there is time.

Joan Hayden, Seminole Street, asked via email whether other residents have had delays in mail delivery over the holidays. Mayor Dewey and CM Sweep replied they have had problems and have heard this from others as well. The issue has been raised with leadership in the U.S. Postal Service and they are working on straightening it out.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:17 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper*, Town Clerk